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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turks Defy EU Efforts for Suspending Talks

All papers report France and Germany are seeking a specific timetable, an 18-month deadline, for Turkey to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic, although leaders Chirac and Merkel have been forced to moderate their hard line positions. Prime Minister Erdogan phoned Merkel, telling her to avoid a historic mistake by making new demands on Turkey, adding that the European Union has more to lose than Ankara if relations worsen.

A senior source from the Turkish government told Radikal that like the EU, Ankara is preparing to put the brakes on relations, planning to slow down progress on political issues if there is no easing of the partial suspension of negotiations at the upcoming EU summit on December 14-15.

"The negotiation process will be impacted but will continue," said visiting Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt after a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul yesterday. At a joint press briefing with Gul, Bildt said, "Turkey's modernization is the most significant process that Europe has. We all know that it is not completed; there are still steps to be taken." Bildt noted, "Turkey is not a neighbor of Denmark and Sweden. Turkey is situated in a volatile and strategically significant region." Gul said, "We think that in the end everybody will consider Turkey's membership talks from a strategic perspective."

Papers carry an open letter sent by eight members of the House of Lords to The Daily Telegraph, which said, "The partial suspension of Turkey's accession to membership of the European Union is insulting to the Turkish people. Turkey, a secular state and significant member of NATO, is now being driven away from Europe and toward Islamic fundamentalism." Zaman says the MPs also asked the British government to launch direct flights to Turkish Cyprus, urging for an end to the international isolation of the north.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-EU

Murat Yetkin commenting in the liberal-intellectual Radikal notes that Turkey has plans of its own for the direction of its EU entry process: "The EU leaders' latest decision on postponement of the negotiations encouraged the government to be prepared to put the brakes on the EU-Turkey relationship. Sources say that there is still debate in the government as to whether to announce these measures at the end of the summit on December 14-15, but they add that these measures will be noticed when they are implemented. Turkey's reaction to the possible postponement decision at the summit already worries the EU commission, and some leaders are already advising Turkey to continue the negotiations and to not react harshly, regardless of the decision coming out of the summit.

It is hard to guess whether it is going to be in Turkey's interest if the government decides to put the brakes on the EU-Turkey relations, but the issue is already in the government's agenda."

Erdal Safak writing in the mass appeal Sabah suggests Turkey play the energy card: "One of the priority items on Merkel's agenda when she takes over the term presidency of the EU is the energy issue. Because the EU has to develop a concrete partnership with the countries who produce energy and who transfer it. Azeri and Kazakhstan oil and natural gas can be transferred to Europe either through Russia or Turkey. After last winter's problems with Russia, the EU prefers Turkey to be the transit country. The energy issue is covered in the negotiations under chapter 15 and this chapter is not included among eight chapters to be postponed. So why doesn't Turkey use this chapter 15 in response to the EU decision to postpone eight chapters and say 'I am postponing the energy integration with the EU'? Maybe, this will resolve the issue."

ANKARA 00006599 002 OF 003

Opposition, Business Circles Negative on Erdogan as President
Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and Yeni Safak: On Tuesday, the Turkish opposition parties urged Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to call an early general election, saying this would help defuse strains over secularism and the troubled ties with the EU. "I urge Erdogan to display an honest and democratic attitude," said Deniz Baykal, leader of the main opposition CHP. Baykal said he would not object if the general elections are in April and if the AKP wins again, Erdogan could move on to get elected president by the parliament in May. Mehmet Agar, leader of the center-right DYP, also urged Erdogan to call an election in the spring. A leading Turkish industrialist, Mustafa Koc said Erdogan's presidency abandoning AKP would create "serious consequences" for his party, lining up behind earlier remarks by another top businessperson, Guler Sabanci, who had said Erdogan staying in active politics, i.e. not the presidency, would be better for Turkey.

Baser, Ralston to Meet in Europe
Sabah reports Turkish and American special envoys for countering the PKK, retired generals Edip Baser and Joseph Ralston, are to hold "The PKK and Europe" meeting in a European city this month. US and European terrorism experts will participate in the meeting.

Pamuk Due in Sweden to Receive Nobel Prize
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal and Cumhuriyet report Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk will fly Wednesday with his daughter to Stockholm where he will be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Pamuk said before departing for Sweden that he would deliver a speech on Wednesday before receiving the prize Sunday. The Turkish embassy in Stockholm is to host a luncheon and a reception in honor of Pamuk to which Turkish and Swedish media members, politicians and businessmen will be invited. Sabah reports a sign posted on Stockholm streets, bus stops and commuter vehicles welcomed Pamuk, saying, "Dear Mr. Pamuk, as a small token of appreciation, we've registered pamukforpresident.se for you."

TV Highlights
NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- On Wednesday, Prime Minister Erdogan will travel to Syria for a

one-day visit to meet with the Syrian Head of State Assad and Prime Minister Otri.

- Turkish religious affairs Diyanet head Professor Ali Bardakoglu said when asked whether he could respond to the goodwill gesture of Pope Benedict XVI by crossing himself in a church, that he could visit a church as a tourist, not as a worshiper.

- Turkish security forces on Tuesday killed five PKK militants in clashes in the mainly Kurdish border province of Sirnak where two soldiers were also killed by a landmine blast. The security forces confiscated nearly four tons of food supplies, weapons and materials used in mine construction from a cave used as a winter base by the PKK.

- Turkey has been fined by the European Court of Human Rights to pay Euro 183,748 in compensations in 17 different cases of torture, mistreatment and rights violations in the country.

- Turkey's Constitutional Court is considering a request for the annulment of social security reforms.

- State Minister Ali Babacan said inflation would be curbed to "single digits" by the end of the year.

International News

ANKARA 00006599 003 OF 003

- President Bush said during a meeting with Shiite leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim that Washington was not satisfied with the pace of progress in Iraq.

- Iraqi President Talabani and Kurdish leader Barzani agreed in a recent meeting that resolving the Kirkuk problem was their top priority.

- Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis said the shape of ties between Turkey and the EU had an impact on Turkey-Greek relations.

- Greek Cypriot leader Papadopoulos maintained UNSYG Annan blamed both sides for the deadlock in Cyprus.

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